

Garrett Cenotaph
Mercer, Penn'a.

HABS No. Pa.-534

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District No. 5, Pennsylvania

Historic American Buildings Survey
Karl E. Morrison, District Officer
319 Marine Bank Building, Erie, Pennsylvania

GARRETT CEMOTAPH
Mercer, Mercer County, Pennsylvania

Owner.

James Pearson Garrett.

Date of Erection

Approximately 1835.

Architect

Unknown.

Builder

James Pearson Garrett.

Present Condition

Good.

Number of Stories

Height 13' 8".

Materials of Construction:

Sandstone, coarse cement mortar.

Other Existing Records:

Personal recollections of Miss Caroline Griffith of Mercer,
Mercer County, Pennsylvania.

Additional Data-Bibliography:

Personal interviews, inspection of monument and drawings.

GARRETT CENOTAPH
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History has recorded many fine and distinctive monuments to the memories of those who have passed on. These memorials are scattered throughout all parts of the world. Some of them have been erected by individuals and some by communities. There are also others that are quite peculiar and attract attention, not only in the place where they have been constructed, but their odd design or the queer ideas of those who made them carries its message to other communities. Finally they acquire a fame, quite evidently not intended nor thought of by the one or ones who constructed or caused them to be built.

Such a monument was fashioned many years ago in the small and old, town cemetery located in Mercer, Mercer County, Pennsylvania. This cemetery occupies something like an acre of ground on the southwest corner of North and North Erie Streets, and may be said to be abandoned, in that interments are no longer permitted, and the newer burial ground is used.

The Garrett monument is very unique in construction and design and exhibits an influence of the Grecian temple revival period with an underlying thought of a sacrificial altar. Tradition says that James Pearson Garrett, a well-known attorney, built the memorial to the memory of his wife, and his three children who died after the mother's death. The children oddly enough, all died of scarlet fever.

James Pearson Garrett lived in the Episcopal parsonage, and at one time in the Robinson House, 208 South Pitt Street, but died before the Civil War. He is buried in the newer cemetery. Mrs. Frances S. Garrett, his wife, was the daughter of Alexander Foster. The Mary Ann Garrett spoken of on the monument was a sister of James Pearson Garrett, and in a grave near by Mr. Garrett's mother is buried. All are interred in the immediate vicinity.

The ground for this cemetery was originally donated to the town. It comprised three of four lots, the fourth lot being given to the Presbyterian church.

The Garrett Cenotaph has a rectangular base that is 4' 11" high. Its length is 6' 2" and the width 5' 4". It appears to be square from a distance. Uncut shale slabs are placed beneath the base laid horizontal.

On this base a tapering pyramid is erected, having a height of 8' 9", width 4' and length 4'. This pyramid is set in six courses of sandstone with cemented joints, the top being one piece and recessed to within a short distance of the apex, where a crude Gothic carving completes the triangle of each side. The base of the monument is ornamented with pilasters, one at each corner, and one in the center of the space on each side.

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The center of the base, between the pilasters is recessed and contains the inscriptions which are in script. Above the pilasters slabs of sandstone are laid, cut to resemble mouldings. All of the joints are cemented with what appears to be a sand and gravel mortar. The pilasters of the base have a plain cap, the frieze is also plain, and the mouldings are simple.

The spaces on the two sides of the base are filled with inscriptions, as follows;- West side-"Mary Ann Garrett, died February 12, 1827 aged 27 years and 10 days. Frances S. Garrett died March 10, 1834 aged 28 years, 1 month and 28 days." South side-"F. T. Garrett died October 19, 1835 aged 1 year, 7 months and 16 days. William B. Garrett died December 5, 1836 aged 6 years, 6 months and 16 days. Alexander F. Garrett died February 24, 1837 aged 5 years, 6 months and 4 days."

Annie Scott Baxter

Approved

Karl Emmerich Dist. Clk.
Oct 30, 1936.